

Mission Creek Watershed Public Forum

City of Santa Barbara Creeks Division

November 11, 2004

Prepared by:



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INTRODUCTION

On Thursday, November 11, 2004 the City of Santa Barbara Creeks Division held a public forum to gain public input regarding the development of a Mission Creek Watershed Action Plan. The public forum was held at the Santa Barbara Public Library, Faulkner Gallery at 40 East Anapamu Street in Santa Barbara, California. There were approximately eight city staff, three consultants, and approximately 60 members of the public present. The meeting was videotaped for later broadcast on community television and a live translation into Spanish was provided.

The public forum was one in a series of public meetings the Santa Barbara Creeks Division conducted as part of a preliminary planning effort to create a compelling vision and action plan for healthy Santa Barbara Watersheds, specifically the Sycamore, Arroyo Burro and Mission Creek watersheds. A public forum was held for each watershed with the purpose of determining the community's watershed planning priorities within each watershed.

Daniel Iacofano, of Moore Iacofano Goltsman, (MIG) Inc. facilitated the forum. Jill Zachary of the Creeks Division provided background information and maps of the watershed and described some of City's activities to improve water quality within Santa Barbara. Paul Curfman, also of MIG, presented a framework of eight (8) components for evaluating and improving watershed health. (That presentation is available at www.sbcreeks.com). The eight components were previously developed by the Technical Advisory Group as a framework for healthy watersheds, and include:

1. Clean Up and Trash Removal
2. Improved Water Quality
3. Erosion and Sediment Control
4. Terrestrial Habitat Enhancement
5. Aquatic Habitat Enhancement
6. Water Management
7. Public Natural/Recreation Areas
8. Increased Public Awareness

About this Report and the Watershed Action Planning Process

This report summarizes the community's expressed interests regarding the eight components of a healthy watershed, particularly in reference to the Mission Creek Watershed. This information, in conjunction with the scientific evaluations now underway, will be used to form the community's vision for improvements within the watershed. By Summer of 2005 the watershed evaluations will be completed and the City will begin a comprehensive visioning process where there will be more opportunities for community input. After the community vision becomes more focused in late 2005 the Watershed Action Plans will be developed through 2006. By early 2007 the Watershed Action Plans should be completed.

MISSION CREEK WATERSHED – SUMMARY OF PUBLIC DISCUSSION

The eight components of watershed health became the organizational structure for the evening's discussions about the Mission Creek Watershed. Community members divided into three groups where they identified issues and challenges within the watershed as well as developed strategies to improve the health of the watershed. At the end of the evening the three groups got back together and summarized the key points of each group discussion. The comments below summarize all of the discussions as well as the written comments received on distributed comment cards.

Clean-up and Trash Removal

Issues and Challenges

- Addressing chronic problem of trash and litter – it's all over
- Addressing litter left behind by homeless
- Overflowing trash cans on Mason and Kimberly streets
- Picking up abandoned shopping carts around the neighborhoods and near bridges
- Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) section treated poorly
- Stopping homeowners from depositing green waste into creeks
- Addressing trash from apartment buildings that ends up in creeks
- Lack of enforcement regarding "No Dumping" signs on Mountain Drive
- Cleaning up debris behind Ralph's Supermarket
- Flood Control won't remove trash

Strategies

- Provide larger trash cans and have them emptied more frequently especially trash cans near creeks
- Increase signage
- Educate public about impacts of trash to watershed
- Periodically survey areas and remove or pick-up large items such as shopping carts
- Provide more information to public regarding trash pick-up
- Provide more resources for cleaning up Westside areas
- Expand Coastal Clean-up program to include creeks
- Establish neighborhood "Adopt-a-Section-of-the-Creek" programs that will sponsor monthly creek clean-up
- Avoid blaming homeowners for trash problems
- Initiate volunteer clean-up programs and hikes
- Have a City staff contact to address resident complaints about trash and dumping

Improved Water Quality

Issues and Challenges

- Stagnant water flow from HWY101 to Beach

- May be the result of algae and oil
- Large area of impervious surfaces in neighborhoods
- R-3, R-4 zones increasing impervious surfaces with new development (on the West Side)
- Use of port-a-potty at Rattlesnake and other trails
- Addressing homeless communities living in creeks
- Difficulty cleaning up creek because of biohazards such as human waste, needles, etc.
- Illustrating value of all water quality standards; standards seem arbitrary
- Informing the community about what is being monitored and where
- Increasing effective collaboration and coordination between advocacy groups
- Technical forums and web-based communications
- Ensuring creek is not contaminated by potential pollutants in government-owned storage near creeks
- Determining how sewer system affects water quality
- Reducing the amount of oil and antifreeze residents dump into gutters

Considerations

- Community prefers natural systems to the use of UV systems
- UV systems reduce bacteria and should not be dismissed as a solution
- Testing of Santa Barbara creeks show bacteria is coming from urban runoff

Strategies

- Flush out creek
- Reduce impervious surfaces
 - Provide incentives for reducing concrete use and increasing use of permeable techniques
- Increase infiltration through installation of more drop inlets, recharge chambers and dry wells, Mission Canyon
- Increase foot patrol around creeks to reduce amount of loitering by homeless people
- Pinpoint sources of raised hazard levels
- Ensure septic tanks in Mission Canyon are the source of water quality problems before installing new ones
 - Look at Questa Report
- Use natural processes to daylight/filter water on publicly owned land
- Install more storm drains
- Install more concrete channels
- Open shelters before Dec. 1st
- Increase law enforcement
- Increase awareness and outreach
- Involve the San Luis Obispo community in plans
- Partner with private landowners to restore creeks
- Inspire motivation to care for creeks among individuals by posting information all around creeks
- Utilize more water filtration ponds and the use of plants for filtering purposes
- Conduct more technical forums and increase web-based communications
- Provide more restrooms in midtown

- Determine the best processes for eliminating bacteria, biowaste, UV, etc.
- Investigate how sewer system impacts water quality
- Daylight storm drains
- Take more measures to prohibit homeless population from camping out in the creek and using the creek as a restroom
- Create a pamphlet for homeowners that explains how to properly dispose of household chemicals and motor oil as well as what things should and should not go into drains

Erosion & Sediment Control

Issues and Challenges

- Lack of an unified approach for solving erosion problems
- Steelhead impacted by erosion (increased sedimentation)
- Reducing hard surfaces; hard surfaces increase speed and amount of water course erosion

Strategies

- Collaborate with County, and Army Corps to find solutions for erosion issues
 - Establish accountability
- Identify where erosions will occur and reduce sediment
- Create one place where both homeowners' permit needs and acquiring homeowner permissions will be handled
- Provide compost facilities
- Increase infiltration techniques
- Obtain technical advice on erosion control
- Apply regulations consistently
- Streamline permit process for water quality advocacy groups trying to solve erosion
- Focus on biotechnical bank stabilization methods
- Ensure appropriate tree removal is taking place near creeks
- Create a list trees/plants that reduce erosion and make available to community and other interested parties
- Ensure homeowners repair banks on their property

Aquatic and Terrestrial Habitat Enhancement

Issues and Challenges

- Removing vegetation in order to manage fuel
- Managing overgrown bush
- Addressing non-native invasive vegetation issues
- Homeowners having difficulty managing debris
- Ensuring flood control program addresses homeowner needs
- Improving the overall appearance of the lower Mission Creek area
- Polluted water
- Preservation of steelhead

Questions

- Will City Fire coordinate controlled fires?

Strategies

- Balance vegetation removal with habitat
- Provide adequate buffer spaces
- Enhance habitat with bioswales
- Plant more deciduous natives in lower areas of Mission Creek
- Determine where concrete can be removed
- More information to public about flood control efforts
- Remove concrete trapezoid in lower missions
- Research and recover steelhead
- Increase public awareness
- Look at low flow pilot channels
- Fix fish passage in the Caltrans channel
- Remove fish barriers
- Raise water table to increase water level
- Identify historical channel
- Remove eucalyptus, arundo
- Plant Oaks and more native plants
- Include water for wildlife in parks
- Create more connectivity for wildlife between environments and habitats to allow for more movement
- Build up bug/amphibian populations
- Maintain creek flow by creating creek pools
- Increase groundwater; keep creeks flowing longer
- Use treated sewer water to increase flow in lower creek section
- Use hydrant water to increase creek flow
- Strengthen laws and policies to protect water quality and natural habitats
- Modify fire management plan to support the retention and enhancement of natural habitats
- Provide incentives and assistance to homeowners to initiate improvements to their degraded backyards and vacant lots
- Restore spawning habitat
- Provide incentives and assistance to creekside property owners

Water Management

Issues and Challenges

- Addressing impacts of global warming
- Increase of runoff
- Lack of established BMPs
- Flood management is needed

Strategies

- Remove impervious surfaces
- Use porous materials for paving and surfacing
- Offer subsidies to use porous materials
- Look at Hayward's re-use of rainwater
- Use permitting process to encourage best management practices (BMPs)
- Remove concrete channels
- Modernize Laguna pump station
- Enforce laws prohibiting dumping in creeks
- Look at BMPs that Housing Authority has used to resolve water management issues
- Create a building policy that would require the use of porous materials
- Have drainage drain to property not to street
- Install French drains in residential properties; it will create less runoff
- Encourage installation of drywells and cisterns
- Encourage and provide incentives for permeable driveways
- Implement a plan to convert sidewalks, roads, and parking to permeable surfaces
- Establish a hotline for residents to report problems and complaints
- Ensure new development does not increase urban runoff

Public Natural/Recreation Areas

Issues and Challenges

- Poor vegetation on beach and lagoon

Strategies

- Create pedestrian trail on public land connecting Mission Lagoon to the Botanic Gardens
- Provide more sidewalks, parks, and signs
- Provide public transportation to Upper Mission Watershed ("Transit to Trailhead")
- Make natural areas the "best examples" of watershed BMPs
- Develop policy on easements to clean creeks
- Convert Mission Creek into a green space, park and transportation corridor
- Improve Mission Creek's reputation as a dumping ground; emphasize Mission Creek's assets
- Provide more public restrooms
- Build footbridges over creek (see creek/education)
- Enhance the West Fig street
- Improve regular maintenance of Bohnett Park; it is overrun with non-native invasive plant species
- Create a park-like area around creek access points for residents to enjoy
- Rehabilitate the lagoon

Increased Public Awareness

Issues and Challenges

- Lack of enforcement
- Restoring our connection to the creeks
- Exhibiting the sociological and psychological value of creeks to our quality of life
- Community's lack of understanding and awareness of their impact on their surrounding environment and the creek
- Community's lack of understanding and awareness of the creek and its functions
- Lack of long-term public engagement regarding these issues

Strategies

- Increase public enforcement and education
- Increase awareness of the impact of pet waste
- Increase awareness about environmentally beneficial plants and damaging plants
- Launch a anti-litter campaign endorsed by public officials
- Post creek awareness signage
- Make parks an example of water management BMPs
- Utilize creek stewards
- Establish "Adopt-a-Creek" programs like Highway projects
- Convene a specialized Mission Creek Task Force
- Implement goals from plan
- Create educational videos for students
- Showcase creeks in a way that will inspire the community to want to restore and care for the creek
- Make results of this forum available to community members
- Sponsor hands-on field trips for students and public in general
- Increase interpretative signage
- Go through existing avenues and community groups instead of starting from scratch
- Use daily nexus to advertise for clean-ups
- Demonstrate how environment relates to public health
- Post flyers about how to appropriately dump trash
- Provide public education programs through schools, Boys and Girls Clubs/ Scouts
- Establish an anonymous phone line for people get information about dumping and to report illegal dumping
- Utilize celebrities spokes persons
- Initiate high school programs where students learn and care for sections of the creek
- Sponsor more walking tours of the creek
- Provide more information in Spanish
- Place an creek clean-up information booth at Farmers' Markets
- Provide signage in multiple languages
- Place "No Littering" and "Empties into Ocean" signs on bridges

General Questions

- Should City help fund issues outside of City limits?
- Why haven't we resolved these issues?

General and Overall Comments and Suggestions

- Watershed extends to County, they need to work together
- Develop an integrated plan with other agencies and organizations
- Establish accountability
- Develop an action plan with a required public review period
- Ensure vision for watershed is derived from community input
- Look for financing for long term maintenance
- Respect property rights; avoid forcing residents to comply with regulations pertaining to their property
- Work with UCSB and their efforts to monitor effects of land uses on runoff
- Share funds and knowledge with other agencies
- Seek regional grants to develop regional plans
- Look at other models
- Coordinate watershed plan with other plans (e.g., fire, trees, flood control)
- Strengthen interagency collaboration
- Determine homeowner responsibilities and educate homeowners about them
- Address resistance from home and business owners
- Determine best use of funds
 - Conduct tests
- Work with Friends of Mission Creek
- Print any informational flyers on recycled paper
- Provide explanation to the public for rise in taxes to pay for creek improvements after Questa Report has shown “no significant impacts were found”
- Prioritize creek improvements and restoration at Cabrillo and State Street; this is a highly visible area
- Establish a Mission Creek Property Owner group to address creek and watershed issues
- Provide a clear timeline of plan improvements and implementation

Mission Creek Watershed Forum

Wallgraphic Transcription 11-11-2004

GROUP 1

Improve Water Quality

- Arbitrary water quality standards
- Need to know what is being monitored and where
- Better collaboration and coordination between groups
- Technical forums and web-based communications
- Government stores potential pollutants next to creek
- More restrooms in midtown (red fake tile roof not typical Port-o-Potty)
- City shouldn't avoid placement of outhouses
- Prefer natural systems to UV systems
- SBCK: tests show bacteria comes from urban runoff
- Need to determine what the best process is for [eliminating] bacteria, biowaste, UV, etc.
- How does sewer system affect water quality?
- City should investigate sewer system
- Pollution from pavement

Clean Up and Trash Removal

- Mountain Drive – there are “No Dumping” signs but a lack of enforcement
- Debris behind Ralph's
- Flood control won't remove trash
- City is blaming homeowners
- Trash cans next to creeks and in parks are not emptied often enough

Aquatic Habitat Enhancement

- Need to know more about steelhead
- Fix [fish] passage at Caltrans
- Remove fish barriers
- Raise water table to increase water level

Terrestrial Habitat Enhancement

- Identify historical channel
- Wildlife connectivity between environments, habitats to allow movement
- Remove Eucalyptus, Arundo
- Plant Oaks
- Include water in parks for wildlife

Water Management

- Remove impervious surfaces
- Use porous materials
- See Hayward's re-use of rainwater

- Offer subsidy to use porous materials
- Use permitting process to encourage BMPs
- Impacts of global warming
- Grass pavement
- Remove concrete channels

Increased Public Awareness

- Pet waste
- Campaign by public officials
- City does a lots of education but not enough enforcement of laws
- Determine good plants from bad plants
- Creek awareness signs
- Parks should be an example of Water Management BMPs

Erosion and Sediment Control

- City, County, and Army Corps work together

Public Natural/Recreation Areas

- Pedestrian route, as close as possible on public land from lagoon to botanic gardens
- Use sidewalks, parks, and signs
- Public transportation to Upper Mission Watershed “Transit to Trailhead”
- Natural areas should be “best examples” of watershed BMP

MISC

- Study environment
- Water quality
- Flood insurance (100 year floodplain)
- Preservation of Steelhead
- Develop an integrated plan with other agencies and organizations

Questions and Issues

- Should City help fund issues outside of City limits?
- Watershed extends to County, they need to work together
- Share funds
- Share knowledge
- Seek regional grants and develop regional plans
- Should look at other models
- Watershed plan should work with other plans: fire, trees, flood control
- Interagency collaboration
- Best use of funds
 - Test and get results
 - Adaptive management

Main Concerns

- Accountability
- Action plan with review
- Community originated vision
- Financing for long term maintenance
- Improved habitat/student stewardship
- Property rights
- Improve water quality (Bacteria)
- UCSB – Monitoring effects of Land Use on Runoff
- Restoring steelhead
- Restoring our connection to the creeks (sociological and psychological value)
- Why do we still have problems?

GROUP 2

Increased Public Awareness

- Creek stewards
- Adopt a Creek programs like Highway projects
- More education and enforcement
- Have specialized Mission Creek Task Force
- Implement goals from plan
- Create educational videos for all students
- Showcase and enhance creeks
 - Will make people want to restore, care for creek
- Send results of this forum to members of community
- Hand on field trips for students and public in general
- Go through existing avenues/community groups instead of starting from scratch
- Use daily nexus to advertise for Clean-Ups
- Make people understand environment relates back to public health

Clean Up and Trash Removal

- Trash from apartment buildings end up in creeks
- Provide more opportunities for big item clean-up
- Provide more information to public regarding trash pick up

Public Natural/Recreation Areas

- City landowners and policy development writer easements to clean creeks

Aquatic Habitat Enhancement

- Remove concrete trapezoid in lower missions/steelhead recovery
- Lower Mission Creek looks bad
- Restore public awareness – showcase
- Look at low flow pilot channels

Water Management

- Too much runoff
- Modernize Laguna pump station
- Enforce dumping in creeks
- Look at what Housing Authority had done – BMPs
- Get building policies to require impermeable
- Have drainage drain to property not to street
- Have French drains in houses [on residential properties] (it creates less runoff)
- City building needs stronger BMPs

Improved Water Quality

- Address homeless [population] in creeks; increase foot patrol, etc.
- Stagnant water
- Biohazards in creek make it hard to clean up human waste, needles, etc...

- [Pin]point source; look at spikes in hazard
- Septic tanks in Mission canyon not a problem (Questa Report) don't want to pay if not a problem
- Use natural processes to daylight/filter water on publicly owned land (storm drains)
- Water filtration ponds also use plants for filter
- Install more concrete channels
- Shelters should open before Dec. 1, yearly
- Increase law enforcement
- Increase awareness and outreach
- Involve the community regarding San Luis Obispo
- Partner with private land owners to restore creeks
- Inspire motivation to care for creeks among individuals (post information all around creeks)

Terrestrial/Land Habitat Enhancement

- Overgrown brush management
- Non-native vegetation problem
- Lots of debris/hard to manage as a homeowner
- More deciduous natives should be planted in lower areas of Mission
- Look at where concrete can be removed? Flood Control project?
- Address repairing watershed with fire/no fire
- Flood control needs to help homeowners
- More information to public regarding flood control
- Will City Fire coordinate burns?

Erosion and Sediment Control

- Identify where erosions will occur and reduce sediment
- Collaborate effort among agencies, be accountable
- One stop shopping for permitting/permission from homeowners

GROUP 3

Public Natural/Recreation Areas

- Turn MC into a green space park/ transportation corridor
- Transform MC from dumping ground into an asset
- Provide more public restrooms
- Build footbridges over creek (see creek/education)
- Enhance the West Fig paper street

Increased Public Awareness

- Signs bridges/dead end streets and creeks
- Post flyers about dumping trash
- Provide public education programs through schools, Boys and Girls Clubs/ Scouts
- Anonymous phone line for dumping – get the word out
- Celebrities spokes persons
- Public anti-litter campaign
- Increase interpretative signage

Aquatic Habitat Enhancement

- Caltrans Channel
- Polluted water
- Build up bug/amphibian populations start high and filter down
- Encourage pools in creek- maintain flow through pool
- Increase groundwater- keep creeks flowing longer
- Use treated sewer water to increase flow in lower section
- Use hydrant water to increase creek flow

Improved Water Quality

- No water flow from 101 to Beach Algae – oil
- Large area of impervious surface
- R-3, R-4 zones increasing impervious surfaces with new development (West Side)
- Open up creek at beach – flush
- Reduce impervious surfaces (incentives to reduce concrete use permeable techniques)
- Increase infiltration – drop inlets, recharge chamber, dry well
- Port-a-Potty at rattlesnake and other trails and multi-mits (7 falls)

Erosion & Sediment Control

- No unified approach for solving erosion problems next to creeks
- Steelhead imported by erosion
- Hard surfaces increase speed and amount of water course erosion
- Compost facilities – increase infiltration and reduce erosion
- Obtain technical advice on erosion control
- Consistently apply regulations
- Streamline permit process for groups of water trying to solve erosion

- Focus on Biotechnical Bank Stabilization Methods
- Enforce tree removal on creeks
- List trees/plants to reduce erosion

Clean Up and Trash Removal

- Everywhere on website LP to Carrillo Trash Homeless (chronic)
- Mason/Kimberly –trash cans overflowing
- Shopping carts (near bridges)
- ACOE section treated poorly
- Green waste from homeowners into creeks
- Large trash cans, that should be emptied frequently
- Signage and education
- Periodic survey and removal of large items such as shopping carts
- More resources for clean up on West side
- Extend Coastal Clean-up of the creeks
- Have neighborhoods adopt a section of creek for monthly clean-up

Terrestrial Habitat Enhancement

- The need to remove vegetation for fuel management
- Balance vegetation removal with habitat
- Adequate buffer spaces
- Enhance habitat with bioswale create more habitat

Water Management

- Encourage drywells and cisterns
- Encourage and provide incentives for permeable driveways
- City [should] implement a plan to convert sidewalks, roads, and parking to permeable surfaces